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Workshop Report

Policy Implications of CPR Knowledge in India, Zimbabwe and Tanzania (R7973, Natural Resources Systems Programme, Semi-Arid Production System)

Department of Geography,
University of Cambridge
Thursday 12 July 2001

1. Background

This project seeks to establish a common framework for the analysis of CPR issues to enable decision makers and stakeholders to understand the issues and the choices involved in policy decisions. The project focuses on multiple-use common pool resources under competitive consumptive pressures from local, regional, national and international stakeholders. The project seeks to promote the ability of natural resource managers in three target countries (India, Tanzania, Zimbabwe) to make informed decisions about regimes for exclusion and exploitation that meet the objective of providing sustained livelihood opportunities for the very poor

Common pool resources in the semi-arid regions of Africa and India are widely seen as critical to poverty alleviation. They are also subject to multiple, often competing claims from resource users. Regimes for effective common pool management are faced with the additional challenge of resolving and reconciling the competing claims of these multiple stakeholders. Some literature has suggested that such claims can be mutually compatible, but, it is increasingly being recognised that such 'win-win' scenarios may be relatively rare. The challenge is to define resource management regimes that are able to secure the claims of the poorest over the flows of benefits that emerge from common pool resources effectively in the face of competitive pressures from other users.

2. Aims of the Workshop

The Workshop was called to review the first four months work by the project team, and specifically:

- To consider the project's review of CPR management and poverty in general, and specifically in the three target countries
- To discuss emerging ideas about the role of common pool resources in poverty alleviation, and the contributions of research to this goal, particularly in the three target countries
- To review and contribute to the development of the project's proposals for future work, particularly with regard to the identification of important policy actors in-country and the design of research and consultation procedures

3. Project Team

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4. Tabled Reports

Adams, W.M., Brockington, D., Dyson, J. and Vira, B. (2001) *Common Choices: policy options for common pool resources*, unpublished project discussion paper.

Chopra, K. and Dasgupta, P. (2001) *Common Pool Resources and common property regimes in India: a country report*, unpublished project discussion paper.

Shivji, I. (2001) *A Review of CPRs: a country report on Tanzania*, unpublished project discussion paper.

Murphree, M. and Mazambani, D. (2001) *Policy Implications of CPR Knowledge in India, Zimbabwe and Tanzania: background paper for Zimbabwe*, unpublished project discussion paper.

5. Agenda

Introduction

Introduction and background to the project (Bill Adams)

Highlights and principal conclusions of the four reports (Dan Brockington)

Key Themes

1. Rational decision-making models in policy analysis (Bhaskar Vira)

2. Safety nets and development (Marshall Murphree)

3. Land tenure and local governance (Issa Shivji)

4. Local governance, empowerment and policy interventions (Kanchan Chopra)

In-country break out groups

Discussion of action plans for in-country work

6. Summary of Work To Date

In the first phase of the project, four reports have been produced, one by the Cambridge team, and one each by the country partners, which were tabled at the workshop. The day did not propose a detailed discussion of these reports, participants were invited to comment in person to the authors or other members of the project team.

Highlights from the four reports (Dan Brockington):

The 'Cambridge report' highlighted the ambiguity of the acronym 'CPR' which can mean both 'common pool resource' and 'common property regime'. While this distinction is clear and non-controversial, it is not universally maintained and can cause considerable confusion. The former are often integral to coping with poverty, but the latter can cause impoverishment. Exclusion from a resource by a management regime may increase poverty levels among those

excluded. Claims to common pool resources are contested and it is important to distinguish what is socially legitimate, legally recognised and actually realised.

From each of the country papers the following themes were highlighted:

India

There are high regional variations in dependence on common pool resources (less in wetter zones, higher in drier zones). Participatory approaches are important, but their imposition can be problematic.

Zimbabwe

Devolution of power is essential for equitable management of common pool resources. But equitability will vary with the resource. The benefits from common pastures may be inequitably enjoyed if they are derived from livestock because livestock ownership is so uneven. Wildlife, potentially, offer a more equitable distribution. It is vital to consider the national political and economic context of resource use when planning for the management of common pool resources

Tanzania

The majority of people depend on common pool resources for livelihoods. The national context of policy reform in land tenure, forest policy and wildlife policy is important in order to understand how the rural poor can benefit from their use. Much loss of common pool resources is state-driven, and people's expectations of the reform are low. Thus if the government was to set up a wildlife management area for local people – the crucial issues would be who controls the hunting quotas and the revenue resulting. Much locally legitimate use is often not legally protected.

Discussion focused on the importance of transaction costs in communal management. These can only be met if the returns from the resources are high – hence the importance of wealthy users and international markets. Donors who pay for the transaction costs of low value goods risk supporting something which is inherently unsustainable when the support is withdrawn.

7. Key Themes

Rational decision-making models in policy analysis (Bhaskar Vira)

The model of decision-making for common pool resource use drawn up by the Cambridge Team assumed rational decision-making. Vira emphasised the highly political nature of decision making. It is vital to question who decides what policy options and trade-offs are, what policy objectives are considered and how they are legitimised.

He emphasised that the model simplified complexities. In real life decision making is not linear, sequential, rational, apolitical or transparent so why use the framework? The main reasons is that it helps set the terms of the debate, even it is does not help make decisions mechanically. Local decision maker and policy decision makers may make come up with very different decisions about the same issues and the model makes it more explicit where the difference in decisions might lie. But it is not a decision tool and is only as good as the political system in which it is used and embedded.

Discussion considered how research projects can inform policy and the role of the outside institution: how far should one be going to facilitate and stimulate work by in country partners. It was suggested that it is useful to facilitate processes happening in-country and there should be a willingness to blur the boundaries between research and activism.

Safety nets and development: subsistence and exchange values of common pool resources (Marshall Murphree)

Thinking on common pool resources is informed by implicit view that they are there for the poor – when people are not in a position to grow or buy food then they can fall back on collecting common pool resources. The resources are not conventionally seen as an engine for people to enter local market. Where they are used for exchange values, these tend to be imported by external actors. Entrepreneurs tends to pay low prices. The local poor gain little, economic elites locally, nationally or internationally gain much.

In Zimbabwe this is manifest in the use of wildlife to support a multi-million dollar hunting and game-viewing industry. The attempt to extend that industry to communal lands is an attempt to get more favourable terms of trade and better distribution of proceeds to the local level. This requires a reorganisation of communities to operate as land and asset management associations and devolution of power to them.

Success is limited in part by the failure properly to devolve power to local groups. It is also moderated by other factors such as the density of wildlife populations, corruption and market. Where villagers have had power they have used the resource shrewdly. In good years, money goes to community projects. In drought years, nothing goes to community infrastructure, but all to household payments.

The discussion focused on the role of donors in changing, sometimes increasing transaction costs, and create different incentives and disincentives to cooperate and manage resources. The Zimbabwe case was contrasted with India, where people were getting more from sale of common pool resources rather than subsistence use. It was observed that common pool resources are valuable to the poor because the rich get better returns from other resources. If value is added to common pool resources, then it is likely that the rich will move in and try and take control of the resource, excluding the poor.

Land tenure and local governance (Issa Shivji)

Control over land, and the forest and pasture resources on it was granted to the state in 1923 with the Land Ordinance. Radical title was vested in the head of the state (the governor) who could grant right of occupancy to specific territories for up to 99 years. ‘Native’ groups who were already using land had ‘deemed rights’. They could continue living there until they would be required to move. Granted rights of occupancy were protected by the law, deemed rights were recognised by the law but not protected. Alienation was accompanied by an administrative decision – withdrawal of deemed rights – not by legal procedures.

After independence radical title was vested in the President, but the same conditions applied. The trend has been that common pool resources continue to be threatened by state-driven appropriation and state-sponsored private investors. If common pool resources are to be protected, secured and developed in the interests of the rural poor, policy intervention has to be at the level of governance, i.e. devolution of power as opposed to simply decentralisation of management.

Some initiatives offer the prospect of such reform. These are the in local government reform programme, with increased power devolved to District level, and the village democracy initiative. The proposals of the latter include reforming the conceptual and political framework: villages should be less a site of development and management but rather a site of democracy and participation. Villages’ relationship with higher levels of government should

be governed by rule of law, and not administrative fiat. Government of the village should separate power such that legislation and policy is decided by the village assembly and the village council (where those powers currently lie) should be the executive of the assembly.

Debate considered the differences between customary tenure in India and Tanzania and East and West Africa and the nature of legality and legitimacy. The proposals offered by Prof Shivji suggested vesting power into what was once an alien institution. How do institutions acquire legitimacy? There was also a concern to include legal protection of the multiple possible uses of land. Can the rights to use forest or pasture be separated from the right to control the land?

Local governance, empowerment and policy interventions (Kanchan Chopra)

India has had titled rights to resources on land independent of the right to use the land itself for some time. User rights from 19th century to grazing fuel wood and timber have been built into forest acts. Private land is also open for communal use at times. Arrangements between cultivators and herders in Gujarat are mutually beneficial allowing for fertilization and grazing.

There have been many experiments with common pool resources in India from the 1980s. The proliferation of Joint Forest Management (JFM) at the state level and the guidelines for watershed management (WSM) from central government all involve interactions with local level institutions. But they try to create participatory systems through legal fiat and the results can be stasis at the local level.

The contrasting perceptions of JFM illustrate some of the problems. Governments thought JFM should be implemented on protected forest, with people empowered to participate and given user rights. Locals wanted the scheme applied only on forests a given distance from the villages – not on protected forests nearby and found that rules of use tended to favour the forest department.

Discussion focused on the need to maintain the poor's access to resources once they had become commercially valuable and the difficulty of providing sustainable subsidies for common pool resource management. There was also the problem of which unit of local organisation was the most effective to use in development work, whether local groups were sufficiently expert knowledgeable to take decisions about resource management and how to deal with the sheer expense entailed by the transaction costs of communal management. The distinction between resources controlled by territorial systems and the resources controlled by legal means without territorial jurisdiction were also discussed. Finally the possibility of dealing with common pool resources in regimes other than communal was mentioned and the difference between individualisation and privatisation were discussed

8. In-country break out groups

The outcomes of these discussions are given in the Action Plans.

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